

The week ending August 29, 2014

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

Kerry calls cease-fire 'an opportunity, not a certainty'

An indefinite cease-fire agreement reached Tuesday between Israel and Hamas in Gaza "is an opportunity, not a certainty," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday, throwing his "strong support" behind the agreement. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the Israeli government has insisted on reserving the right to destroy any tunnels discovered burrowed into Israeli territory. Asked whether such a demand was reflected in the cease-fire, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, that U.S. support for that right had not changed, adding that Israel has said that all tunnels so far identified had been destroyed. Despite the Egyptian announcement of the cease-fire, rocket alert sirens continued to be heard in Israel's southern communities after the truce's slated commencement at 7 p.m. The general parameters of the cease-fire is that this one will not be limited in time, that Israel will allow humanitarian aid—under supervision—into Gaza to begin rebuilding, and that within a month both sides will raise other issues.

Aid flows into Gaza after Israel-Hamas truce

[The Agence France Presse](#) reported that vital humanitarian aid was arriving in Gaza Thursday as residents began rebuilding their lives following a devastating 50-day war between Israel and Hamas that experts say left no winners. The truce, which went into force on Tuesday evening, saw the warring sides agree to a "permanent" halt to seven weeks of bloodshed in a move hailed by Washington, the United Nations and top world diplomats. Under the deal, Israel agreed to immediately lift restrictions on fishing, allowing boats to work up to six nautical miles from the shore in a move which went into effect early on Wednesday. It also pledged to ease restrictions at the two crossings into Gaza, Erez and Kerem Shalom, to allow the entry of goods, humanitarian aid and construction materials, in a move which began Thursday. He said both Erez and Kerem Shalom would resume normal operations on Thursday in line with the norms that existed before the crisis began, with the sides to discuss the new procedures which are to be introduced as a result of the truce. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the rebuilding would go ahead—"but only under our control".

For the latest information on Israel's defense against terror from Gaza click [here](#).

SYRIA

Rebels in Syria Capture Border Crossing with Israel

Rebel factions in Syria, including an al Qaeda affiliate, captured a border crossing between Syria and Israel, Israel's military and Syrian opposition activists said, the second major loss of a strategic site to extremist groups within days, reports [The Wall Street Journal](#). Syrian forces were still fighting to recapture the crossing late Wednesday

around Quneitra, located in the disputed Golan Heights area between both countries, 45 miles southwest of the Syrian capital Damascus. There was no evidence the rebels were attempting to infiltrate Israel. The developments raised questions over whether President Bashar al-Assad's regime is so weakened by Syria's more than three-year civil war that it cannot defend strategic areas. In addition to Syrians, fighters include Jordanians, Palestinians residing in Syria and some other foreigners, the activists said. "The Syrian side of the crossing was overrun today by opposition forces—several different groups dominated by Jabhat al Nusra," said Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, a spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces, using the name of the Nusra Front in Arabic. Israel's military declared the border near Quneitra a closed military zone after one officer received a bullet wound and three mortars landed in Israeli territory. Israel returned fire toward Syrian government positions to deter hostilities from spilling over. Col. Lerner said that while Israel considers the presence of the militants at the border crossing to be a threat, Israel has been preparing for the destabilization of the frontier for years by bolstering its border fences, adding surveillance equipment and deploying elite forces to the border. "The security establishment identified this trend a long time ago," said Amos Gilad, a senior official in Israel's Defense Ministry in an interview with Israel Radio. "The basic deployment has prevailed for a long time."

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

A Novel Tugboat for Wayward Satellites

Wayward communication and navigation satellites—like the two European Galileo satellites that fell short of their intended orbit in late August—could be tugged into position by a novel Israeli microsatellite now under development. "We could save them," said Arie Halsband, founder and CEO of Israel's first private space startup, Effective Space Solutions. "This is exactly the sort of situation we've been anticipating. Our DeOrbiter is a uniquely capable microsatellite, which can also perform rescue missions for renegade satellites. We already performed initial analysis and verified we're up to it." The problem of misplaced and decaying satellites has plagued the space industry and governments for decades. But it's not the only problem, Halsband tells [Israel21c](#). As past general manager of Israel Aircraft Industries' Space Division, Halsband saw these problems as a challenge to solve with the help of systems engineer Meidad Pariente, who helped design Israel's AMOS communication satellites. They started Effective Space Solutions in late 2013. "I'm in the industry many years and I know the needs," Halsband says. "I had the idea to make a powerful microsatellite, and I focused on the need to extend the life of communications satellites that are sent to the graveyard when they still have between six and nine months of useful life left." The Effective Space microsatellite is not only more lightweight and cheaper to make than a full-size satellite, but also much cheaper to launch. This gives the Israeli company an edge over competitors that are designing full-size satellite tugboats, says Halsband, because the price tag for launching a satellite into space is the most substantial cost of the mission—up to \$100 million for a complete launcher. The company, based in Givatayim outside Tel Aviv, is funded with venture capital and plans to launch its first microsatellite in the last quarter of 2016 or first quarter of 2017, if all goes smoothly.